

Lawrence Seaway was close to completion. With a greater influx of commercial activity along the waters, there was a collaborative desire in the region to form an organization whose task would be to promote the development, use and conservation of the Great Lakes Basin while making it possible for the States to derive maximum benefit from its resources. Additionally, the Commission was to serve as an advisory agency of the States and Federal Government. In 1954, at the Great Lakes Seaway and Water Resources Conference the notion of creating a State and provincial compact was discussed. In the following year, the eight Great Lakes States all passed legislation to establish the Commission.

Congressional ratification did not come until 1968 after jurisdiction over the type of consultation the Commission would be able to provide to both the U.S. and Canada had been addressed.

Over the years, the Great Lakes Commission has been responsible for providing a unified voice, quality research, and sound advice for the Great Lakes region. Among its accomplishments are the establishments the Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database, the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control, the Great Lakes Information Network, the Michigan Water Corps, and Great Lakes St. Lawrence Mayors' Conference. I would just like to share briefly with my colleagues a bit about these great programs.

In 1988, the Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database was one of the first compilations of its sort. It provides a comprehensive collection of information on the region's water use, including reports, charts and other publications. Today, it is just one of many database and monitoring programs initiated by the Great Lakes Commission.

The Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control works in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It was created in 1991 to prevent further soil erosion and sedimentation from damaging the Great Lakes waters by using educational and financial tools. This program has already saved more than 650,000 tons of soil and prevented 487 tons of nitrogen and 674 tons of phosphorus from flowing into the waterways.

The Great Lakes Information Network is an online database that combines economic, environmental, travel, and educational information about the Great Lakes. It is a premier search engine on information regarding the region and has won numerous awards. The Commission's work to establish and maintain such a network is invaluable to those who need data and research on the Great Lakes.

Recently, the Michigan Clean Water Corps has also joined the long list of successful programs supported by the

Great Lakes Commission. The Clean Water Corps was established in 2003 by executive order from Governor Jennifer Granholm to work in partnership with the Huron River Watershed Council and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The goal of the Corps is to provide volunteers with training to monitor and distribute information on the water quality of the waters around Michigan and to provide educational tools to assist in creating an informed public.

In 1987, the Commission brought together the regional mayors to meet about Great Lakes issues for the first time. The Commission helped promote the idea that the mayors in the Great Lakes region could unite and be a driving political force. This annual conference also provides a forum for the mayors of the Great Lakes region to share ideas to address the area's problems.

These are just a few of the programs that the Great Lakes Commission oversees and implements. As they continue these initiatives in the coming years, they will also focus more on sustainability and growth.

The Great Lakes Commission is vital for the health and future of the Great Lakes. I would like to thank the Great Lakes Commission for the wonderful work they have done over the past 50 years and congratulate them on reaching this milestone. I hope that my colleagues will join me in expressing that appreciation.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### IN REMEMBRANCE OF BENJAMIN AARON BENJAMIN

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Benjamin Aaron Benjamin, a great musician and teacher, who passed away at the age of 40 on May 22, 2005. Mr. Benjamin was well respected in the Detroit community and dedicated his life to sharing the gift of music with others. He will be sorely missed by those whose lives he has touched.

Benjamin Aaron Benjamin, who learned to play the piano at a very young age, was born in Stamford, CT on March 8, 1965, to James and Rebekah Benjamin. He attended the Hart School of Music and was a concert pianist who devoted much of his time to instilling in children his love of music. He founded the Benjamin Conservatory of Music in 2002 to provide music education to the people of the greater Detroit area.

He is mourned by his family, former students, and many people across my home State of Michigan. Benjamin is survived by his parents, his daughter, Yasmine, and his seven siblings: James, John, Mark, Richard, Chandler, Grace, and Myah.

This is, indeed, a great loss to all who knew him and to those who have benefitted from his talent and love of

music. I know my colleagues will join me in paying tribute to the life and work of Benjamin Aaron Benjamin. I hope his family takes comfort in knowing that his legacy will be passed on through the music he loved so much and by the many whose lives have been enriched by his efforts.●

##### TRIBUTE TO MR. J. GEORGE MITNICK

• Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a good friend, George Mitnick, who I have known for more than a quarter-century. He passed away on August 6, 2005, at the age of 87, and I would like to take this opportunity to honor his life.

A devoted family man, George was married for 61 years to Willine Engel Mitnick. Together, they raised two daughters, Ronne Mitnick Hess and Karen Mitnick. He and his wife resided in Jasper, AL, until his passing.

George was born in Hartford, CT, on December 21, 1917, and attended college at the University of Connecticut. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the military and served in World War II. He was a captain in the 65th Infantry Division in the European Theatre and received two Bronze Stars for his service.

George Mitnick was very devoted to charitable efforts, making generous contributions in money, time and energy. Some of those organizations included United Cerebral Palsy and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. In addition, much of his philanthropic work was aimed at young people. Both the Mitnick Fellowship Fund and the Mitnick Wilderness Boot Camp helped youth in Alabama.

Well known as a business leader, he was a co-founder of Top Dollar Stores in the 1950s. The company, which expanded to over 250 stores, was acquired by Sav-A-Stop Company, and George served on the company's board of directors and on its executive committee. He also served as a director of the First National Bank of Jasper and First Commercial Bankshares.

George was very active in civic, professional and political organizations. He was committed to making a difference across the State of Alabama, dedicating much of his time to community organizations. He served as president of the Alabama Retail Association, the Jasper Chamber of Commerce and the Jasper Rotary Club. He was instrumental in founding the Walker Area Community Foundation and the Walker College Civic Concert Association.

He served on a number of boards including the Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center, the Walker County Association of Retarded Citizens, Walker Junior College and Walker Regional Medical Center. He was also very involved in the political process, playing an integral role in Americans for Good Government.

Active in the Jewish community in Alabama and across the nation, George